



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

READY B5 RECAP

APRIL 2022



DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

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MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS



WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL EDITION OF **READY B5 RECAP**, THE NEW QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

As Deputy Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education, I lead our state's efforts to strengthen the birth-to-five early childhood care and education system so that every child has the opportunity to enter kindergarten ready. Born and raised in Virginia (and a proud product of the Charlottesville Public Schools), I have spent the last four years working closely with partners like you across the state to unify early childhood at the Virginia Department of Education. I have met many of you - whether in person or over Zoom - and look forward to meeting more.

Today I am excited to introduce Ready B5 Recap. As the name suggests, this newsletter will focus on how we work together to support all Virginia children - from birth to age five - to enter school ready. We will include all programs that serve children from birth to age five including schools, Head Starts, child care centers, family day homes, preschools and faith-based programs.



With this quarterly newsletter, we seek to:

Appreciate – Ready B5 Recap highlights the incredible work happening in early childhood in Virginia. Ready B5 will tell the stories of communities, organizations and individuals who are making an impact on our littlest learners. Early childhood leaders and educators make a difference every day yet their work is not always recognized. By elevating local stories and sharing with a statewide audience, Ready B5 Recap seeks to honor these extraordinary efforts.

Build community – Ready B5 Recap will summarize the key need-to-know information so that all early childhood leaders and educators can be up-to-speed on what is happening. Everyone can see how their work at the local or regional level connects to the broader statewide efforts. ReadyB5 will also highlight the people who do this work, recognizing that ours success depends on human relationships - with each other, with families and with our littlest learners.

Inspire – We hope Ready B5 Recap will motivate you with stories of success from across the state. We know the work is difficult and we sometimes lose sight of the impact that we have on families and children as well as each other. By sharing the positive impact of our collective work, we hope to re-energize and inspire you to continue to make a difference in thousands of lives.

We know your time and attention are valuable and we thank you for opening this newsletter. Please enjoy and let us know what you think. Send your thoughts and ideas to earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov.

With deepest appreciation,
Jenna



EARLY CHILDHOOD GOALS

ACCESS AND CHOICE

Expand accessibility of quality public and private early care and education to reach vulnerable children, ensure all families have quality choices and better prepare Virginia's future workforce.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Increase the capacity of early care and education providers to engage and support families to foster children's healthy development, learning, and well-being towards school readiness.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Improve child outcomes by supporting continuous improvement of teacher-child interactions and use of curriculum in all classrooms/settings.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Partner with providers to keep all children in care healthy and safe.

REGIONAL CAPACITY AND INNOVATION

Establish regional infrastructure supported by strong statewide data systems to coordinate across all settings, address unique community needs and ensure opportunity for all children statewide.

LAUNCHING READY REGIONS FOR VIRGINIA



**Beginning in
July 2022,
VQB5 participation
will be coordinated
through
Ready Regions**

Important and exciting changes are coming to the way early childhood education programs are coordinated in communities across Virginia. Starting in 2022, [Ready Regions](#) will bring unprecedented levels of coordination, accountability, and family engagement to early education programs in every community in the Commonwealth.

Virginia's nine Ready Regions will bring public and private partners together to ensure Virginia's early childhood system prepares children for success. Ready Regions were identified through a competitive process that was facilitated by Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and were announced in December 2021. VECF and the VDOE will continue to work closely together to support the launch and success of Ready Regions.

The Ready Regions network covers all geographic areas of the state from the tip of Southwest Virginia to the Eastern Shore and all points in between. Each Ready Region has a lead organization charged to partner with parents, school divisions, social and human services agencies, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education programs, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations to coordinate and integrate critical services and resources for families with young children.

A priority for Ready Regions will be partnering with the VDOE to provide accountability and coordination of the new [Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System \(VQB5\)](#) in all publicly funded early childhood classrooms across Virginia, including Head Start, public schools, private centers and family day homes. This regional coordination will allow for 100% participation in VQB5 starting in 2022-2023 and beyond.



**READY
REGIONS**

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT F EDUCATION EARLY CHILDHOOD



While Ready Regions will formally begin their work as key coordinating agencies in July 2022, the selected lead agencies are already hard at work. In the first quarter of 2022, Ready Regions have focused on building organization structures to support the big tasks ahead of them. They have developed plans for outreach and engagement, and on working together as a community to solidify their vision for early childhood.

In the next few months, Ready Regions will be focusing largely on recruitment for participation in Practice Year 2 of VQB5, and preparing for the 2022–2023 year. Ready Regions will begin supporting registration for VQB5 Practice Year 2 (2022–2023) in early August. If your program is interested in participating or learning more about VQB5 Practice Year 2, please complete [this form](#) and a Ready Regions representative will contact you with additional information. Additional information about VQB5 is available on the VDOE [Quality Measurement and Improvement \(VQB5\)](#) webpage.

Please stay tuned for more information on Ready Regions in your locality!

**Ready Regions
will allow 100%
participation
in Practice
Year 2 of
VQB5.**

**Visit
[vecf.org/
ready-regions](https://vecf.org/ready-regions)
to learn more
about
Ready Regions**

SPOTLIGHT ON

Director - Rebecca Ullrich

Director, Early Childhood Access and Enrollment



Rebecca Ullrich joined the Department in June of 2020 to oversee the transition of child care functions from the Department of Social Services to VDOE. Previously, she worked in national advocacy in the DC area, where she gained expertise in the Child Care and Development Block Grant and using data to inform child care policy development and implementation. While she has never held the official title of “teacher,” Rebecca’s passion for early learning was cemented during her undergraduate studies, when she worked part-time as a classroom aide in the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research.

As the Director of Early Childhood Access and Enrollment, Rebecca oversees efforts to increase access to publicly-funded early childhood programs across the Commonwealth’s public-private system. She is committed to maximizing family eligibility for services and continuously increasing the number of affordable, high-quality early childhood options for eligible Virginia families.

Rebecca lives in Richmond with her husband and a rambunctious, Zoom-bombing pup named Scout. In her spare time, she enjoys reading a good thriller, trying out recipes, doing a yoga or cycling class, and exploring her new home town. Rebecca is expecting a baby boy in July, making access to child care very personal!

STAFF | PROVIDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The word "Welcome" is written in a large, yellow, bubbly, cursive-style font with a black outline.



The VDOE Division of Early Childhood Care and Education includes six key offices that together support the agency’s goal to support birth-to-five programs in the state. These offices include:

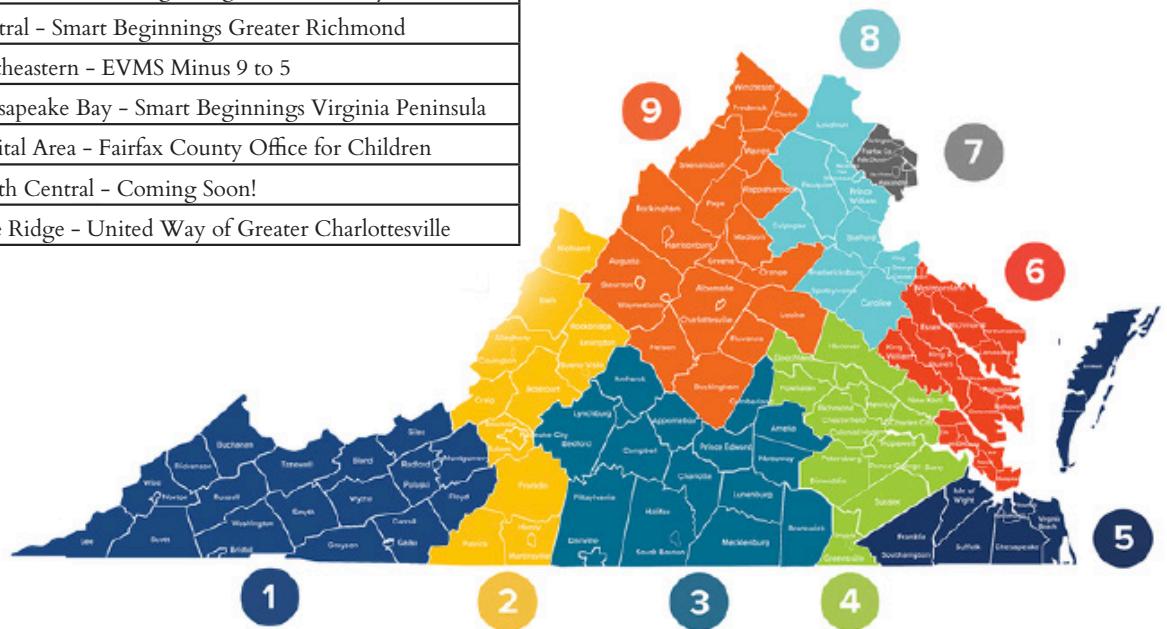
- Office of Child Care Health and Safety
- Office of Access and Enrollment
- Office of Early Learning
- Office of Head Start Collaboration
- Office of Operations
- Office of Quality and Workforce

This quarter, we were pleased to welcome the following new members to our team: **Arlene Agustin**, Licensing Inspector (Eastern); **Cassie Leichty**, Licensing Inspector (Peninsula); **Mark Davis**, Licensing Inspector (Fairfax); **Susan Ellington-Sconiers**, Licensing Inspector (Central).

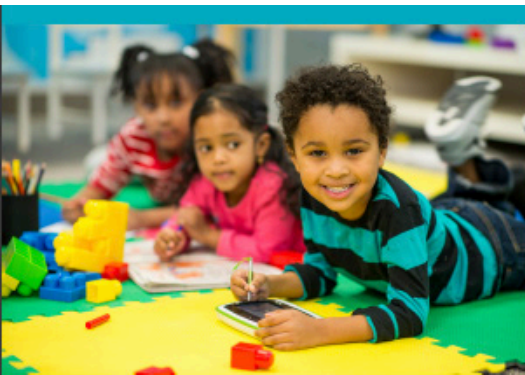
READY REGIONS

In future editions of the Ready B5 Recap, this section will feature an update from one of the nine Ready Regions in Virginia. Check back to learn about a new Ready Region in next quarter's edition!

READY REGIONS & LEAD ORGANIZATIONS
1. Ready Region Southwest - United Way of Southwest Virginia
2. Ready Region West - United Way of Roanoke Valley
3. Ready Region Southside - Smart Beginnings Danville Pittsylvania
4. Ready Region Central - Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond
5. Ready Region Southeastern - EVMS Minus 9 to 5
6. Ready Region Chesapeake Bay - Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula
7. Ready Region Capital Area - Fairfax County Office for Children
8. Ready Region North Central - Coming Soon!
9. Ready Region Blue Ridge - United Way of Greater Charlottesville



• Although one organization is identified as the Ready Region lead, they must partner with school divisions, social and human services, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs, and other organizations involved in Virginia's public-private network focused on the coordination and integration of critical services and resources for families with young children.



REFLECTIONS

A Summary of First Quarter Successes



Child Care Centers and Family Day Homes

The Office of Child Care Health and Safety (OCCHS) team has continued its efforts to provide regulatory oversight and consultation to child day programs, who continue to face many adversities while the pandemic shifts and transforms. We have gradually increased the number of on site inspections at facilities, taking precautions to ensure the safety of children in care, providers, families and OCCHS staff, and will resume all on site inspections next month. We are in the process of updating two regulation sets, General Procedures and Information for Licensure, and Background Checks for Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems, to ensure that the regulations align with statutory requirements, and to clarify and update existing requirements.

The team has been working hard developing a new licensing system, which offers an online provider portal to help streamline licensing and background check processes. The portal was launched in March, kicking off the first phase of the new system that allows existing and prospective providers to submit Virginia Central Registry Requests and portability requests through the portal. It also allows prospective providers to submit initial applications for licensure or initial filings for exemption. We look forward to continuing to make great strides in the upcoming months in collaboration with providers.

Virginia Preschool Initiative

VPI Programs have been hard at work during the start of 2022. With schools serving more VPI children than ever before this year, teachers and program leaders are working hard to continue supporting VPI three- and four-year-olds through their learning and growth goals. All VPI classrooms are continuing to complete two CLASS observations this year (one in the fall and one in the spring), use a high-quality curriculum, and administer VKRP Pre-K for four-year-olds.

As school divisions begin planning for the 2022-2023 school year, the VDOE is working to support VPI programs in planning for strategies to support enrollment and family choice.



Early Learning Support

Taking monumental steps towards closing gaps in access to a high-quality, standards aligned curriculum, Virginia continues to expand [early childhood curriculum options](#) for publicly-funded birth to five programs. Curriculum is one of the two quality indicators measured in VQB5. VDOE shared an update on VQB5 curriculum options and access via a [pre-recorded webinar](#) on March 22.

To date, there are 34 vetted curriculum options, including 8 infant and toddler, 26 preschool and 2 mixed-age options. Among the list of VDOE-approved curriculum options is [STREAMin3](#): Virginia's open-source curriculum option available to all birth to five publicly-funded programs at no-to-low cost, which officially launched this spring. Interested programs can [register](#) to attend the first of a series of "Get to Know STREAMin3" live on April 7th, or to receive a link to the recording following this event.

Head Start

Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) programs have been working diligently ,navigating the pandemic and working to return to full in-person comprehensive services for children and families moving into the new year.

The VDOE is excited to announce that over 105 grants were awarded this year, totaling \$169,945,645 dollars provided to date through the Office of Head Start to our Virginia EHS and HS programs. While ensuring the adherence to the updated federal guidance included in the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the funding has been utilized to continue supporting innovative efforts across enrollment, recruitment, workforce development, community needs, health, and safety.



VQB5

After completing over 4,200 CLASS observations and entering information about curriculum use in the fall, programs participating in VQB5 Practice Year 1 are using their classroom level results to target areas for improvement as they prepare for their spring CLASS observations. New programs who are [interested](#) in participating in VQB5's Practice Year 2 have also been connecting with [Ready Regions](#) from across the state. VDOE shared an update on VQB5 Practice Year 1 activities, as well as plans and enhancements for Practice Year 2 during a [webinar](#) held on March 16th, and during the [Early Childhood Advisory Committee \(ECAC\)](#) meeting held on March 24th. Feedback on the Practice Year 2 Proposal is being collected through an [online survey](#), which closes on April 15th.

Early Childhood Special Education

Improving inclusive practices for children in preschool with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) has been a focus of many school divisions this quarter. The December 2021 child count showed a slight increase in the percentage of children attending a regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of services there, moving from 24.6% to 25.6%. This school year, a change in VPI requirements focused attention on inclusion as VPI programs are now expected to meet or exceed a 10% target inclusion rate. To support school divisions in improving both the quantity and quality of inclusion, the VDOE provides many training and technical assistance opportunities. Fifteen school divisions are receiving Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers (IPOP) Intensive Technical Assistance through the Training and Technical Assistance Centers. Five school divisions are participating in Project PASS (Preparing for Academic and Social Success) with technical assistance from the VCU Autism Center for Excellence. Over 40 teachers participated in the Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Service Delivery Model Community of Learning. Efforts to improve the quality of inclusive placements also included a pilot program in 29 classrooms utilizing the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP). Data will be used to examine and understand the alignment between the ICP and the CLASS.



FOCUS ON WELLNESS

April is National Stress Awareness Month

Spring is a time of renewal and rejuvenation. But oftentimes, stress that is not managed well can get in the way of reaping the immediate, natural benefits to our mental health that this season brings us. Here are few mind, body and soul refreshing ideas for you to try out this upcoming month:

Practice meditation

One of the most effective ways to deal with stress is to learn how to silence the mind. Meditation is one of the most popular methods of achieving this quiet.

Exercise

Another way to battle the debilitating effects of stress is to exercise. Whether you're a jogger, bicyclist or just like to take long walks, be sure to get some fresh air and exercise into your daily routine.

Visit your doctor

They're really in the best position to get you started on the path to a stress-free lifestyle. Make an appointment today.

Source: [*How to Observe Stress Awareness Month, National Today*](#)

